

Name: **Willow Creek East WY-030-14N95W35-2012**

FORM 1

Documentation of BLM Wilderness Inventory Findings on Record

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness inventory information on all or part of this area?

No X Yes _____ (if yes, and if more than one area is within the area, list the names of those areas):

a) Inventory Source: _____

b) Inventory Area Name(s)/Number(s): _____

c) Map Name(s)/Number(s): _____

d) BLM District (s)/Field Office(s): _____

2. BLM Inventory Finds on Record:

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory area is associated with the area, list each area and answer each question individually for each inventory area):

Inventory Source:

FORM 2

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

a. Area Number/Name **Willow Creek East WY-030-14N95W35-2012** Acreage 16918.23

(1) Is the area of sufficient size?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Describe the boundaries of the area (roads, property lines, etc.). If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check “Yes” and describe the exception. If more than one inventory area is involved, list the acres in each and evaluate each area/sub-area separately. In completing steps (1) – (5), use additional space as necessary.

The unit is bound on the north and northwest by a pipeline right-of-way. The unit is bound on the east by a Class 3 Light Duty, well road, with aggregate surface maintained by industry. The unit is bound on the south by BLM 3318 a.k.a. Shell Creek Truck Trail Rd., a Class 3 Light Duty, well road, with aggregate surface maintained by the BLM. The unit is bound on the west by BLM 3319 a.k.a. Adobe Town Rd., a Class 3 Light Duty, well road, with aggregate surface maintained by industry.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT CONDITIONS: The Willow Creek East area under consideration is 16918.23 acres of BLM public land. It is located within the following townships:

TOWNSHIP	RANGE	SECTION	TOWNSHIP	RANGE	SECTION
t13n	r94w	19	t14n	r95w	32
t13n	r94w	18	t14n	r94w	30
t13n	r95w	13	t14n	r95w	25
t13n	r95w	14	t14n	r95w	26
t13n	r95w	15	t14n	r95w	27
t13n	r94w	7	t14n	r95w	28
t13n	r95w	12	t14n	r95w	29
t13n	r95w	11	t14n	r94w	19
t13n	r95w	10	t14n	r95w	24
t13n	r94w	6	t14n	r95w	23
t13n	r95w	1	t14n	r95w	22
t13n	r95w	2	t14n	r95w	21
t13n	r95w	3	t14n	r95w	20
t13n	r95w	4	t14n	r94w	18
t14n	r94w	31	t14n	r95w	13
t14n	r95w	36	t14n	r95w	14
t14n	r95w	35	t14n	r95w	15

t14n	r95w	34	t14n	r95w	16
t14n	r95w	33	t14n	r94w	7

The dominant vegetation cover is sagebrush-grassland. The primary land uses are for oil & gas exploration and livestock grazing. The primary, dispersed recreational activities in the area are hunting and hiking.

(2) Does the area appear to be natural?

Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A ☐

Description: The 8.1 miles of primitive routes (i.e., unimproved roads and two-track trails) and 16.85 miles of wilderness inventory roads (i.e., well access roads) detract from the unit's naturalness. Examples of these primitive routes and wilderness inventory roads are demonstrated in photos 1-2 and 4-11. When hiking across the Willow Creek East Unit, the casual observer cannot escape the constant view of primitive routes. These primitive routes create noticeable linear intrusions and disturbances that interrupt the experience of any wilderness character briefly encountered in areas untrammelled by the works of man.

The area contains thirteen oil and gas wells throughout the Willow Creek East Unit (see locations in unit map and examples in photos 3 and 13-14). These oil and gas installations within the unit represent permanent improvements and loss of primeval character. When examining the status of the oil and gas wells, one of these wells is flowing, one has pumping rods, one is waiting on approval, three are permanently abandoned (1993-2002), and seven have expired permits (1981-2012). Despite the variation in status, these wells remain as existing installations that detract from the naturalness and are substantially noticeable to the casual observer while hiking through the unit. All wells, which are not abandoned, are managed as active wells and receive commercial vehicle traffic for periodic maintenance. This traffic would interrupt the casual observer's experience of wilderness character due to road dust plumes and the contrast between the white coloration of these vehicles moving across the tan, brown, and olive landscape. Well pads do not receive final reclamation approval until they have been plugged and abandoned. Visual contrasts created by surface disturbances, including well pad turn-arounds, soil exposure around the facilities, and a rectangular area of wheat grass, remain until final reclamation is established.

The Willow Creek East Unit also contains two man-made reservoirs (see locations on unit map). When the casual observer encounters these man-made borrow pits and impounded reservoirs, the linear and textual contrast on the landscape attracts the attention of the observer to this modification constructed with mechanized equipment.

The casual observer is often attracted to bodies of water while hiking. Water adds interest and diversity to the landscape. When arriving at any of the two reservoirs, the casual observer would notice that it is not a natural lake and that they have encountered an impounded, muddy borrow pit surrounded with dikes. The hiker seeking refreshment from clean water, would quickly notice that this "reservoir" is designed for cattle operations where the water is unfit for human

consumption or swimming. The numerous range improvements, including the two reservoirs, one water well, and .46 miles of fence, were constructed, primarily, for commercial grazing operations. These improvements give the casual observer a perception that they are visitors to a cattle range rather than a wilderness untrammelled by the works of man. While the presence of cattle is compatible with a natural landscape for wilderness inventory purposes, the noticeable presence of numerous grazing-related developments in this unit is not.

In sum, the cumulative impacts on naturalness including the numerous oil and gas wells, primitive routes, wilderness inventory roads, and permanent range improvements have impaired the naturalness in the Willow Creek East Unit to a level that is incompatible with the definitions of wilderness provided in Section 2(c) of the Wilderness Act of 1964 (incorporated in FLPMA 1976):

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

(3) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

(4) Does the area or the remainder of the area (if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational scenic or historical value)?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Description:

Summary of Analysis

Area Name and/or Number: Willow Creek East WY-030-14N95W35-2012

Summary

Results of analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities of solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

Check one:

_____ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC).

___X___ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

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Team members:

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